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RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Note verbale of 12 December 1994 from the Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations has the honour, on behalf of the Central American countries, to address this note verbale to the President of the General Assembly in connection with the consideration of agenda item 43 entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields" at the morning meeting of the plenary General Assembly on 5 December 1994.

Please be informed that for reasons beyond our control it was not possible to make a statement on the item on behalf of the Central American countries. It is respectfully requested, therefore, that you issue the attached statement as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 43 in order that the position of our region may be formally recorded.

ANNEX

Statement of the delegation of El Salvador to the United Nations on behalf of the Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama

1. I am pleased to make this statement on agenda item 43 entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields" on behalf of the Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

2. The Central American countries share the belief that the founding purpose and ongoing work of our Organization is to make the aspirations of peoples into realities and realize fundamental principles and objectives for the improvement of the welfare of mankind both with regard to international peace and security and in the promotion of economic and social development, respect for human rights, and strengthening of friendly relations and cooperation among States. The United Nations thus became a coordinating centre for the achievement of these purposes, but unfortunately it was impeded in its work by the ideological and political differences which characterized international relations in the period since the Second World War and were felt within the Organization.

3. The ending of East-West rivalry seemed to offer new and broader opportunities and generate expectations of change in the international order, especially in the long-standing critical situation of the developing countries, as a result of better and greater understanding of world problems, of the interdependence of nations, of the process of globalization, of shared responsibility in the search for solutions, of the need to strengthen multilateralism, and of the historical significance of the role of the United Nations in this new era, supposedly one of action to consolidate international cooperation and solidarity.

4. It seemed that in this new international situation the role of the United Nations could acquire a new dimension and renewed energy and that the Organization would be able to achieve greater understanding by means of consultation among Member States in the adoption of measures and mechanisms which would respond successfully to the old and new challenges facing the international community, especially the serious economic and social problems of large numbers of people in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. There can be no doubt that the Organization's mandate, in different circumstances and situations more difficult and complex than existed at the time of its founding, needed internal institutional reform as a means of adapting and preparing it to work more effectively in an international order in which political, economic and social problems proliferated, with the consequent assignment of greater responsibilities to the United Nations, which is now required, justifiably or not, to meet the expectations of Member States by catering to the most diverse needs.

6. This necessitated the introduction of reforms which would lead to greater coordination in the structure of the United Nations and in its representation at the country level, in order to secure greater efficiency and coherence in operational activities for development. With the ending of the cold war it was thought that the economic and social sectors must adapt to the new international realities. However, to make progress in the restructuring of the system was to be no easy task because of the divergent interests of Member States - not just the differences between East and West but also the divergencies in North-South relations - and because of the existence of a vast number of international bodies and organs, with their own decision-making and reporting procedures, answerable both to the United Nations and to other authorities. As the Secretary-General said on 20 January 1990 in his address to Parliamentarians for Global Action, each such body "has its own council accountable to different ministries and interests in the capitals of Member States". This situation requires a change of outlook which must become deeply entrenched so that Governments become fully convinced that it is essential to generate the necessary political will to permit and facilitate the process of change in the Organization.

7. We, the Central American countries, understand the importance of and the need for restructuring, particularly in the light of the Security Council summit held in January 1991. Although 1985 saw the formation of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency and the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, whose recommendations were adopted by the General Assembly in 1986, we believe that the Security Council summit really marks the beginning of a process of change in the Organization, for that was when new political frontiers were opened, mainly as a result of the commitment undertaken by Security Council members to make the Council more efficient in dealing with major world issues in the political sphere and those relating to economic, social and development objectives. In this connection, we support the initiative for restructuring and revitalizing in the economic and social field and view it as part of a larger process which includes the revitalization of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

8. Our support for restructuring and revitalization in the economic and social field is based on recognized principles, cited by the Group of 77, which we believe it is important to reaffirm: that the mandate of the United Nations should be discharged in accordance with its Charter, with recognition for the universal character of the Organization; democratization of the decision-making process; respect for the principle of non-intervention; avoidance of politicization and selectivity; greater plurality of ideas and diversity of approaches and strategies; respect for the principle of equitable geographical representation and the equality of States.

9. The Central American countries, as developing countries, hope that the simplification and rationalization of the processes and procedures of the United Nations system, in particular those concerning the interrelated spheres of programming and implementation, decentralization and evaluation, will prove successful, particularly if, as a result, the United Nations system is capable of providing substantial and effective support to the national plans, priorities and objectives of developing countries, and, even more important, if its implementation mechanisms become more viable and more efficient.

10. Central America has been a region in profound crisis for the past 14 years and is now in the process of consolidating peace and promoting development, particularly since some countries have ended armed conflicts whose deep economic, political, social and ecological scars have made reconstruction necessary. We therefore believe that it is vital to establish effective coordination between the United Nations system and the international financial institutions in the Bretton Woods system in order to harmonize priority programmes for the consolidation of peace and development with adjustment and economic stabilization policies, thereby ensuring that those policies do not become obstacles to achieving a firm and lasting peace.

11. As the Secretary-General stated in his report (A/49/558), the Central American countries believe that it is too early to make a final assessment of the impact of General Assembly resolution 48/162 on the governing bodies of the United Nations development funds and programmes. It is therefore of the utmost importance to request the Secretary-General, within a reasonable time-period not to exceed the period agreed upon in the negotiations for the new composition of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), to reassess the reforms introduced, and, in particular, the impact they have had on solving the problems of the developing world, and their contribution to that process. That will help to determine the system's strong points or to indicate where further remedial action must be taken in order to tackle or address the root causes of threats to peace and social stability, which are also the causes of both domestic and international tension and conflict.

12. With regard to the restructuring of the Executive Boards of the agencies mentioned above, we believe that it is important to stress that the new structure does not correspond to a principle which, if respected, would guarantee greater participation and democratization. Our subregion is not represented, mainly because we have always encountered opposition to the establishment of a mechanism for enforcing the principle of equitable geographical distribution and regional rotation, whereby, through our direct participation we would be able to defend and promote the interests of our countries.

13. Lastly, we continue to believe that the United Nations system is an essential mechanism for coordinating the efforts of the international community to rise to global challenges and address the most pressing problems confronting humanity. We must stress, however, that it is still an intergovernmental entity and, that, accordingly, the success of its mandate depends on the political will and conviction of its Member States to resolve world problems. We understand that it is a difficult and complex task to reconcile interests in an organization that no longer has 51 Member States, as it did in 1945, but rather 184. If, however, the United Nations is to serve humanity efficiently, Member States must change their traditional perceptions and provide all the political and financial support necessary to ensure that the Organization will have sufficient resources to fulfil its mandate. Concerning financial aspects, we feel constrained to point out that the greatest responsibility lies with the

industrialized countries, since the developing world cannot be made to bear a heavier burden than it does already, particularly as regards the solution of serious socio-economic problems in order to eliminate underdevelopment.